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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Letter dated 15 April 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the annexed statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, dated 14 April 2008, concerning the new proposals of the President of Georgia on peaceful resolution of the conflicts on the territory of Georgia (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 16.

(*Signed*) Irakli Alasania
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 15 April 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

On 28 March 2008 the President of Georgia came up with new proposals aiming to facilitate peaceful resolution of the conflicts on the territory of Georgia.

The Georgian authorities' proposals to the Abkhaz side envisage, in particular, the setting up of a joint free economic zone in the Gali and Ochamchire districts, guaranteed Abkhaz representation in Georgia's central executive and legislative authorities, creation of a constitutionally guaranteed position of vice-president of Georgia and appointment of Abkhaz representative to this position, and the right to veto all those decisions by the central authorities, which concern Abkhazia's status and rights. It was repeatedly underlined that the Georgian authorities offer Abkhazia wide federalism as well as necessary preconditions for developing its culture, language and national identity. Abkhazia will enjoy unlimited autonomy within the borders of Georgia, and this plan may be guaranteed by the international community, including the Russian Federation.

On 12 April 2008 the President of Georgia put forward another set of proposals. The respective ministries were instructed to inform the Abkhaz side about the new initiative and facilitate intensification of direct links between the Georgian and Abkhaz sides. Special mention, in the context of confidence-building between the sides, was made of the importance of carrying out a package of confidence-building measures, which was agreed with the EU, and the necessity of developing additional initiatives. It was underlined that the success of peace initiatives is conditional on a more active involvement of the international community, including the Russian Federation, in the ongoing processes, and on the United Nations-led comprehensive in-depth review of the peace process.

Special attention, with respect to the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, was focused on the importance of implementing the peace plan developed by the Georgian side and approved by the OSCE ministerial meeting in Ljubljana.

The Ministry of Economic Development was tasked with developing a plan, as well as allocating funds for the guaranteed purchase of agricultural goods from local populations, including from those territories which temporarily are not under Georgian control. In the confidence-building context, 10 students will be selected from Tskhinvali and financed with scholarships in the framework of the Georgian presidential programme for study abroad. The summer vacation programme for schoolchildren will also be enhanced for 2008.

The State Minister for Reintegration of Georgia was entrusted with the task of elaborating a special programme to ensure reintegration of former combatants and their retraining and employment.

By the President's instruction, inter-agency working groups on legal, economic and political issues were set up involving the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Economic Development and Justice and the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration and the National Security Council. The aim of these groups is to process thoroughly the new peace initiatives, develop a plan for their

implementation, enter into a direct dialogue with the Abkhaz side and de facto Tskhinvali authorities and involve the international community in this process.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia maintains that the Georgian side's new peace proposals open up a completely new vista for peaceful resolution of the conflicts, create a unique mechanism for the protection of rights of national minorities in Georgia and provide additional opportunities for the engagement of the international community in the conflict resolution process. It all takes on a particularly meaningful focus in the context of the existing reality — the Georgian authorities' new peace initiatives provide the only reasonable and peaceful alternative to dangerous and provocative steps recently masterminded by the external forces in the conflict zones.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia urges the United Nations, OSCE, the United Nations Secretary-General's Group of Friends, other international organizations and States concerned to give their support to the Georgian side's peace proposals, engage in the implementation process of the above-mentioned initiatives and, hence, give a fresh positive impetus to peaceful resolution of the conflicts on the territory of Georgia.